

April 24, 2005

Freedom ***Watch***

Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan

A large, intense explosion is the central focus of the image, with a massive, bright orange and yellow fireball rising from the ground. Below the fireball, a thick, dark plume of smoke and debris billows outwards. In the foreground, a low, rectangular building with several windows stands on a flat, arid landscape. The background shows a hazy, desert-like horizon under a grey sky.

*Coalition destroys more
than 8,000 pounds of
ordnance*

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Sgt. Michael Abney

Soldiers from B Co., 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, prepare to search a building in the Zurmat Province of Afghanistan Oct. 15, 2004.

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Medal of Honor recipient Gary Littrell tells Soldiers from Delta Battery, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, about the old 173d patch he wore when he was an enlisted Soldier.

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Cover: Photo by Spc. Jason Krawczyk



Freedom Watch

Freedom Watch is the weekly publication of Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan.

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Freedom Watch, an Army publication, is published each Sunday by the 20th Public Affairs Detachment at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. Printed circulation is 6,000 copies per week.

In accordance with AR 360-1, this Army newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. military overseas.

Contents of the *Freedom Watch* are not necessarily the official view of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Army.

Deadline for submissions is 0730 Zulu each Friday. All submissions are subject to editing by the 20th Public Affairs Detachment, located in Bldg. 425, Room 107, Bagram Airfield. We can be reached at DSN 318-231-3338.

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Fallen Heroes

Story and photo by
Sgt. Douglas DeMaio
20th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Friends, counterparts and compatriots gathered to bid a final farewell to the 18 Americans who perished in a helicopter crash April 6.

Side by side, men and women lined the streets of Bagram leading to the airfield to pay tribute April 9 to the fallen heroes lost in the incident.

The loss is a terrible tragedy to all those serving and is an even greater tragedy for the families who are suffering from this misfortune, said Lt. Col. Richard Price, CJ6 for Combined Joint Task Force 76.

"They have given the ultimate sacrifice for their country," Price said.

The Americans were en route to Bagram when their CH-47 Chinook helicopter crashed near Ghazni.

U.S. Soldiers aid ANA at security checkpoint

Soldiers from Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix, supervise a security checkpoint run by the Afghan National Army outside of Kabul, Afghanistan, March 30. CJTF Phoenix's mission is to train and mentor the ANA to help make it a more effective fighting force.

Story and photos by
Sgt. Joe McFarren
CJTF Phoenix Public Affairs

CAMP PHOENIX, KABUL, Afghanistan – In an effort to help curb threats, Soldiers from Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix, assisted soldiers from the Afghan National Army in setting up security checkpoints for incoming traffic to the Kabul area.

Three squads from A and D companies, 1st Battalion, 51st Infantry Regiment, 76th Infantry Brigade, were on hand to aid the Military Police Company of the ANA Central Corps.

"Safety was the first priority for us," said 1st Lt. Adam Doane, a platoon leader with A Company who was the officer in charge of the checkpoint. "Once we set up and made sure we had our security, we just made sure to be there if the ANA needed our help."

"For us, it was about training the ANA on a complete mission from beginning to end," said Lt. Col. Paul Grube, the 1-151st Battalion commander. "We saw this as a perfect chance

to train the ANA."

The checkpoint resulted in apprehending an individual carrying rocket propelled grenades and anti-tank mines.

"Three things really came out well from this mission," Grube said. "First, we had the good training with the ANA. Second, any time you get the chance to do a patrol or any mission with coalition forces in a joint environment it is a benefit. Third, it proved to be a big tactical benefit in capturing all the RPGs and weapons."

The ANA handled the majority of the work load with the American Soldiers providing

assistance.

"They were mainly doing all the searching and work," said Sgt. Charles Beauchamp, a squad leader with A Company. "We were just there to give them guidance on what to do in certain situations and if they needed our help."

The ANA have been

training with the U.S. Soldiers for more than five months.

"We've slowly built up to this point," Doane said. "We started with them several months ago just doing basic patrols and techniques. Now we are up to full operation orders, rehearsals using all the troop-leading procedures."



U.S. Army Sgt. Charles Beauchamp works with a soldier from the Afghan National Army Central Corps Military Police Company at a security checkpoint outside of Kabul, March 30. Beauchamp is a squad leader in A Company, 1st Battalion, 51st Infantry Regiment, 76th Infantry Brigade.

NMAA graduates first basic training class

Story and photo by
Sgt. Joe McFarren
CJTF Phoenix Public Affairs

KABUL, Afghanistan – Soldiers from Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix oversaw the graduation of the first class of basic training soldiers enrolled in the new National Military Academy of Afghanistan on March 17 at the Academy's parade grounds outside of Kabul, Afghanistan.

112 cadets swore into the Academy in

front of three Afghan National Army generals as well as the CJTF Phoenix commander, Brig. Gen. Richard Moorhead, and Col. James Wilhite of the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan, as well as representatives from the Ministry of Defense and the International Security Assistance Force.

With the completion of officer-candidate basic training, the cadets will complete a four-year college degree at the Academy. They will then be commissioned officers in the ANA.

In his address to the cadets, Wilhite provided inspiration and encouragement to the newest members of the ANA.

"I will not be here the entire time you are going through your schooling," Wilhite said. "But in four years, when you graduate, I will come back to usher you into the next step of your

military careers."

A team of six Soldiers from CJTF Phoenix combined to aid the training of the cadets as mentors for the instructors. Capt. Eric Creviston headed up the American team comprised of 1st Sgt. Rodney Spade, 1st Sgt. Steven Ridings, 1st Sgt. Todd Brown, 1st Sgt. Anthony Hall and 1st Sgt. Paul Young.

"Everything that happened went off better than planned," Creviston said. "We were there to mentor the instructors, and everyone stepped up and performed to the level they needed to in order to make the mission a success."

The basic training course included physical fitness training, basic infantry tactics, weapons familiarization and qualification, military customs and courtesies, first aid, road marches and drill and ceremony.

The basic training "was very comparable to a basic training in the United States," Creviston said. Cadets "didn't have to be pushed or pressured into joining. They came on with the desire to be a soldier and a leader and performed that way."

The newly formed Academy is the first military academy for the Afghan National Army. It is based on the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.

"The training was very good and really pushed us physically," Cadet Mohamed Azim said through an interpreter. "It is a proud day for all of us to go into the Academy."



Cadets from the National Military Academy of Afghanistan Basic Training pass in review March 17 to signify the completion of their training.

Enduring Voices

Why is maintaining your equipment important?



British Navy Petty Officer Michael Oates
4th Squadron, Royal Air Force
"Improved maintenance improves performance."



Spc. Christopher Murphy
D Company, 113th Aviation, Nevada National Guard
"If I don't maintain our equipment then the aviation assets wouldn't be able to perform their mission."



Romanian Cpl. Bogdanel Necula
300th Infantry Battalion
"My weapon is my primary piece of equipment, so I must clean it in order to be able to use it when I need it."



Sgt. Naomi Wemhoff
Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 173rd Airborne Brigade
"If your equipment isn't maintained, you limit your unit's ability to function properly."

Operation Iron Damper

Coalition forces continue to press enemy

Story by

Spc. Claudia K. Bullard

105th Mobile Public Affairs
Detachment

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Coalition forces in southeastern Afghanistan continue their efforts to maintain regional security for reconstruction projects and parliamentary elections scheduled for later this year.

"We are sending a message that there are no 'sanctuaries' in the Kandahar Province," said Lt. Col. Clarence Neason, the commander of 3rd Battalion, 7th Field Artillery.

This message was delivered in the form of Operation Iron Damper, a joint effort by the Afghan National Army's 1-1 Kandak, Romania's 300th Infantry Battalion and the U.S. Army's 3-7th FA to capture or deny sanctuary to anti-Coalition militia forces reportedly trying to establish operations in Kandahar



Spc. Johnny R. Aragon

Coalition forces from D Co., 113th Aviation, Reno, Nev., drop leaflets over Kandahar Province on April 3. The leaflet drop is the first of three phases of Coalition forces disrupting Taliban attempts to establish a presence in the province.

Province.

Neason said this operation let insurgents know that "we remain focused on sustaining and enhancing security and stability throughout the province."

Information leaflets

encouraging residents to turn in the locations of munitions and improvised explosive devices were air dropped into the Shah Wali Kot and Arghandab districts. The drop was followed by meetings between local

elders, ANA and U.S. Army personnel to determine the welfare of their people and gain information on ACM forces.

"The word is out," said

continued on next page

Religious Services Around the CJOA

Kabul

Sunday

0630 - Christian Worship Service
1030 - Christian Worship Service (U.S. Embassy Marine Lounge)
1430 - Christian Worship Service
1530 - Small Group Study 301
1600 - Small Group Study 201

Tuesday

1530 - Small Group Study 301

Wednesday

1430 - Small Group Study 401

Friday

0830 - Latter-Day Saints
1330 - Small Group Study 101
1430 - Coffee House Ministry

Saturday

1130 - Catholic Mass

*** All times
Zulu/GMT**

Camp Phoenix

Sunday

0430 - Catholic (Italian)
0530 - Non-Denominational Prot.
1330 - Catholic (French)
1530 - Non-Denominational Prot.

Tuesday

1430 - Bible Study

Wednesday

1430 - Gospel Bible Study

Saturday

1430 - Gospel Worship Service

FOB Salerno

Sunday

0300 - Foundations Bible Class
0400 - Traditional Prot. Worship
0530 - Catholic Mass
0730 - Latter-Day Saints
0830 - Gospel Service
1400 - Inspirational Movie Night

Saturday

1500 - Contemporary Prot.

Bagram Airfield

Sunday

0400 - Liturgical Prot.
0530 - Roman Catholic Mass
0830 - Latter-Day Saints
0700 - Traditional Prot.
1115 - Korean Language Prot.
1300 - Gospel Service

Monday

1400 - Gospel Choir Rehearsal

Tuesday

1400 - Gospel Bible Study
1545 - Prot. Music Rehearsal

Wednesday

1600 - Catholic Music Rehearsal

Thursday

1430 - Gospel Choir Rehearsal

Friday

1430 - Jewish Prayer
1500 - Women's Bible Study

Saturday

0500 - Seventh-Day Adventist
1330 - Korean Choir Rehearsal
1515 - Roman Catholic Mass
1630 - Prot. Choir Rehearsal
Daily, Monday-Friday
0700 - Roman Catholic Mass
0745 - Noon-Day prayer

Kandahar Airfield

Sunday

0430 - Catholic Mass
0500 - Bible Study (325th FSB)
0630 - Prot. Worship
1330 - Gospel Choir Practice
1400 - Sunday School
1530 - Gospel Service

Monday

1300 - Gospel Choir Practice

Tuesday

1430 - Purpose-driven Life Study
1300 - Gospel Choir Practice
1430 - Praise Team Practice
1530 - Bible Study

Wednesday

1300 - Gospel Choir Practice
1430 - Praise Team Practice
1530 - Prot. Worship

Thursday

1430 - Praise Team Practice
1500 - Latter-Day Saints

Friday

0830 - Islamic Prayers
1330 - Jewish Sabbath Prayers

Saturday

0400 - Men's Breakfast
1300 - Catholic Mass
1430 - Praise Team Practice
Daily, Monday-Friday
0330 - Catholic Mass

continued from previous page

Capt. Devin Larson, the commander of Headquarter, and Headquarter Services, 3rd Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, adding that villagers, with leaflets in hand, were helpful in gaining information about ACM forces.

Larson, along with an ANA platoon and two platoons of U.S. Forces, visited with the elders of Gul Kolache after the drop.

"They have been spreading the word up and down the Arghandab river," said Larson

In Arghandab District, Romanian forces performed night operations to find reported militants. Romanian army personnel fired illumination rounds and crew-served weapons

mounted on armored personnel carriers. The Romanian APCs are effective at traversing Arghandab's rough terrain, carrying Romanian troops well into areas the enemy once thought of as safe.

"We want to keep the area clear of insurgents and to demonstrate we have the capacity to manage the area," said Lt. Col. Adrian Soci, 300th IB's commander, "We want them to know who controls the area."

Maj. Luke Peters, team chief for 1st Kandak, 205th Corp., and the ANA soldiers he supports, air assaulted into Shah Wali Kot District, an area where the nation's growing army has not previously had a strong influence. Peters, who called the ANA soldiers "true patriots," said they were very well received by the local population.



Spc. Johnny Aragon

Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 7th Field Artillery and the Afghan National Army's 1-1 Kandak visit with village elders to talk about the security situation in their area.

The 1st Kandak conducted village assessments to get a sense of how the local population feels about central and provincial governments and gained intelligence on ACM locations.

"This is the best opportunity Afghanistan will have in decades to rebuild their country and have peace and stability," said Peters. "The people are tired of war and will do whatever they can to bring peace for future



Sgt. Maj. Radu Predescu

Soldiers from the 300th Romanian Infantry Battalion maneuver their armored personnel carriers down Kandahar's main streets.

The 2005 Field Artillery Magazine photo contest has been extended until June 1, 2005. The purpose of this contest is to obtain high-quality photos capturing field artillery personnel or units in training or actual full-spectrum operations for use in the chief of the Field Artillery's poster series, as cover or other shots for Field Artillery or in other esprit de corps or strategic communications projects. For rules, submission guidelines and other contest details go to www.army.mil/famag or send e-mail to: fred.baker@sill.army.mil. Field Artillery Magazine is a joint magazine published by the Department of the Army for field artillerymen.



PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

POL-E-CHARKHI, Afghanistan – A soldier from the Afghan National Army points down range while firing a Romanian SPG-9 73mm recoilless rifle on the range here. Coalition soldiers from Afghanistan, Romania and the United States had the opportunity to fire several weapons donated to the ANA.

Master Sgt. D. Keith Johnson
OMC-A PAO

If you have high-quality photos of service members supporting the Coalition mission or enjoying well-deserved off-duty time, please e-mail them to freedomwatch@baf.afgn.army.mil. Please include full identification and caption information, including who is in the photo and what action is taking place.

Things that go BOOM!

Story and photos by
Spc. Jason Krawczyk
20th Public Affairs Detachment



Members of the Estonian emergency ordnance disposal team place charges that will destroy captured munitions.

GHANZI, Afghanistan - There I was, holding a nine-foot Soviet rocket surrounded by 8,000 pounds of explosive devices – and the engineer next to me tells me to be careful.

“Be careful” did not even describe what I was thinking. “Be careful” is something you say when you hand someone eggs or tell them to parallel park, not when one wrong move could set off 937 pounds of C-4 and 8,000 pounds of captured enemy ordnance, sending you and a group of engineers into orbit.

A Company, 229th Engineer Battalion and an Estonian emergency ordnance disposal team destroyed the munitions April 2 while operating in Ghanzi Province.

The destruction of the ammunition ensured that they will never be fired at Coalition or Afghan troops.

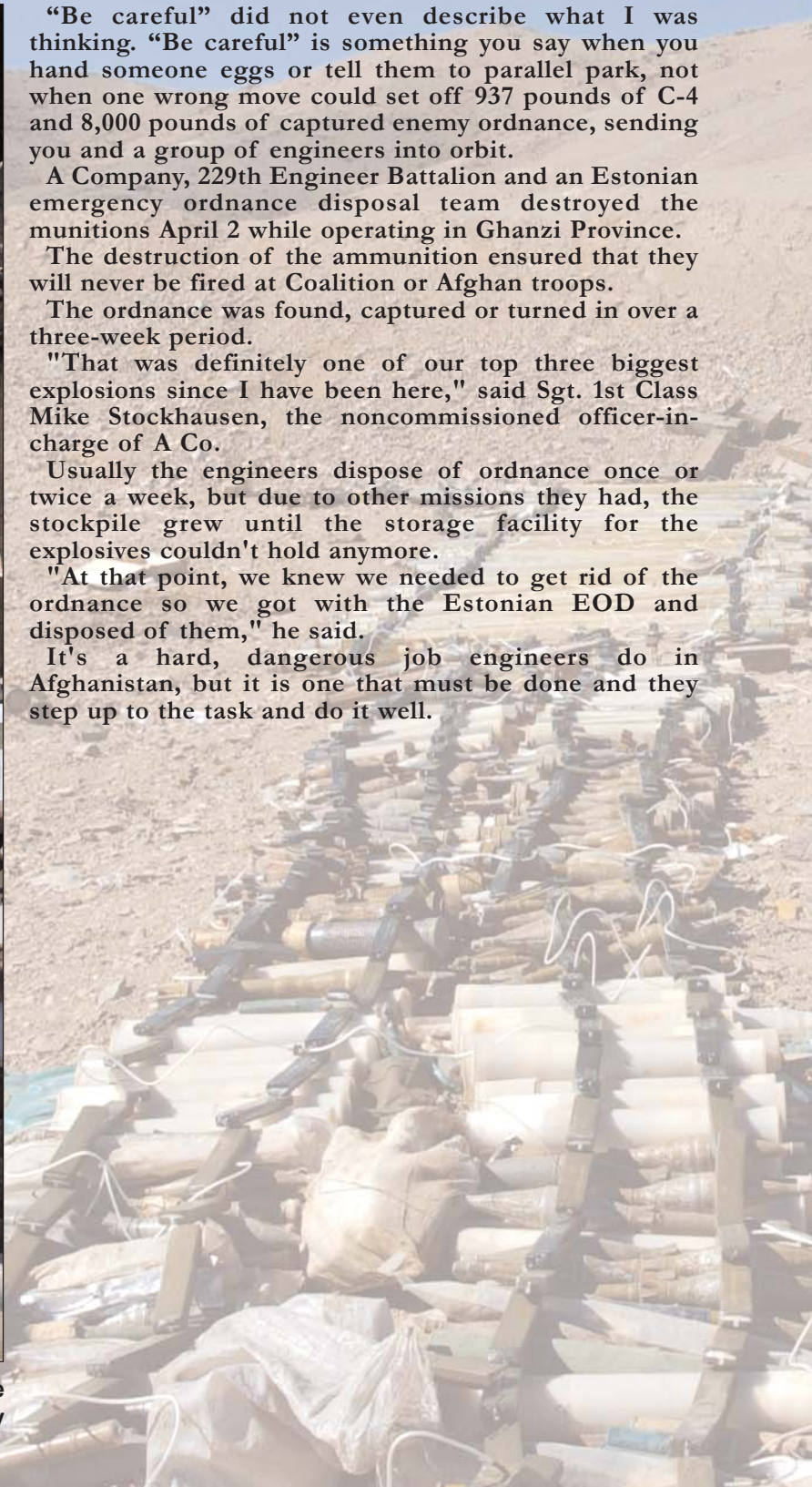
The ordnance was found, captured or turned in over a three-week period.

“That was definitely one of our top three biggest explosions since I have been here,” said Sgt. 1st Class Mike Stockhausen, the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of A Co.

Usually the engineers dispose of ordnance once or twice a week, but due to other missions they had, the stockpile grew until the storage facility for the explosives couldn't hold anymore.

“At that point, we knew we needed to get rid of the ordnance so we got with the Estonian EOD and disposed of them,” he said.

It's a hard, dangerous job engineers do in Afghanistan, but it is one that must be done and they step up to the task and do it well.





A cloud of smoke rises into the air after more than 8,000 pounds of munitions were detonated April 2.



Members of the Estonian emergency ordnance disposal team lay out munitions for destruction.



Spc. David Galloway prepares blocks of C-4 explosive to place with the captured munitions that were detonated April 2.

Medal of Honor recipients visit Soldiers in Afghanistan

Story and photos by Sgt. Tara Teel
CJTF-76 Public Affairs

FOB ORGUN-E, Afghanistan - Soldiers pulled up chairs and piled almost on top of each other around tables in the small dining facility to hear animated war stories the visitors had to tell that ranged from getting shot down in a jet to getting ambushed by the enemy.

Four Medal of Honor recipients from different services visited troops at Forward Operating Base Orgun-E and other Coalition bases in Paktika Province April 5 and 6.

Retired U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Leo Thorsness, retired U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Gary Littrell, retired U.S. Army Col. Jack Jacobs and retired U.S. Navy SEAL Lt. Thomas Norris all fought in the Vietnam War where they all received the Medal of Honor, the highest award for valor given in the armed services.

"The best part about the visit was seeing the expressions on the Soldiers' faces when we visited and knowing that they were really glad that someone cared enough to come see them," said Littrell.

"It is an honor to have these men here with us," said First Sgt. Mario Cocktrell, A Company, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment. "It is

very educational for the younger Soldiers here to be in the presence of such accomplished gentlemen. Most VIPs wouldn't visit a place like Orgun-E because it is so remote."

The visitors met with the leaders of FOB Orgun-E for a briefing on the area and a summary of what they do and hope to accomplish during their year-long deployment to Afghanistan.

"This country's in good shape and we have sharp, brave, intelligent troops who are trained to do military things here, building a country and its government," said Thorsness.

"We really appreciate the job you are doing here with terrorism," Norris said to the troops. "You are on the front line here."

The visitors took turns telling the jam-packed dining facility about the events that led up to them getting their Medals of Honor.

"This trip was important for morale," said Sgt. Major Bradley Meyers, 508th operations sergeant major. "You see all the Soldiers smiling, talking with the recipients, listening to their stories, and everyone is really enjoying themselves."

Thorsness talked to the Soldiers about freedom, something that was stolen from him as a prisoner of war for six years after he had to eject from his aircraft on his 93rd mission in Vietnam.

"We are born in the United States with freedom and you never realize how lucky you are until you don't have it anymore," he said. "There are a lot of places where freedom is not guaranteed."

During the talks at the dining facility, the Medal of Honor recipients were more than eager to listen to the Soldiers' tales and asked plenty of



Leo Thorsness shows his Medal of Honor to troops during a visit to Forward Operating Base Orgun-E in Paktika Province, Afghanistan. Four Medal of Honor recipients visited bases April 5 and 6, telling their war stories, listening and talking to troops.



Medal of Honor recipient Jack Jacobs talks with Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment in the dining facility during their visit to Forward Operating Base Orgun-E Tuesday. Jacobs and the other recipients went on patrol and stayed the night at the FOB with the Soldiers.

questions about their previous deployments and their time in Afghanistan.

"It was really great hearing their support, coming from those who did so much more," said Spc. Scott Chamley, Delta Battery, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade. "It made us feel really good and proud."

The visit left lasting impressions and boosted the morale of both the Soldiers and the recipients. The recipients plan to come back and visit the Soldiers again as soon as possible. They continued on their way to spread the same morale boost and stories to bases in Iraq.

"People back home love you guys," said Norris. "Our hats are off to you."

Blue Stars search out enemy, provide quick response

Story and photos by
Sgt. Douglas DeMaio
20th Public Affairs Detachment

KHOWST PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Darting past ravines and ridgelines, and soaring through the sky like eagles in flight – Soldiers of A Company, 3rd Battalion,

158th Aviation Regiment, race toward their enemy, able to provide a quick response to any anti-Coalition militia action.

Scouring the terrain in UH-60s, these Blackhawk crews search for any avenue available to defeat the enemy. "We provide lift assets for

the Salerno, Khowst-bowl region," said Chief Warrant Officer Chris Palumbo, pilot. "From delivering a quick reaction force to providing casualty evacuation, you call, we haul."

For more than a month, A Co., from Giebelstadt, Germany, has been operating at FOB Salerno. The company's crews provide general support missions for Regional Command East and have displayed the Army values the nation asks of its men and women in uniform.

"Nothing gets your blood pumping like pulling guys out of a hot LZ (landing zone)," Palumbo said.

Palumbo's crew has aided troops in battle on more than one occasion and uses the dynamic abilities of the UH-60 to accomplish the various missions they are assigned.

"This is a tool we use to insert troops anywhere we need at any time," said 1st Lt. Robert K. Beale. "(The) Blackhawk is the most versatile platform for the execution of any and all missions."

Although the crews and the helicopters have exceptional capabilities, the treacherous terrain coupled with ACM activity in the region

make the job inherently dangerous.

"The terrain is a big enemy and the quick-changing weather can make the job more difficult," Palumbo said, "But the Kalashnikov (AK-47) is our biggest enemy."

The risks are worth the reward, said Spc. Bryan Todd, crew chief.

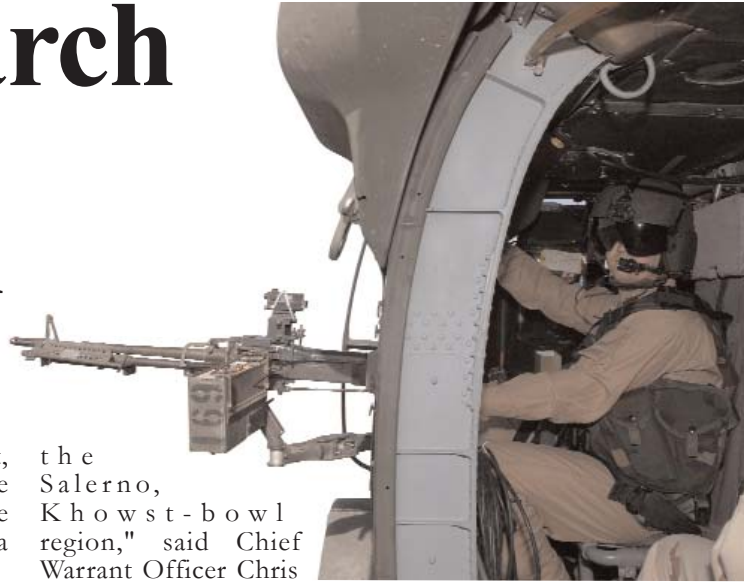
"Our job is to help troops and protect the aircraft," Todd said. "From what I've seen, I think this is one of the better jobs to have in theater."

Providing logistics support to sustain combat operations and ascending to and from the battlefield gives the crew job satisfaction, Todd said.

The crew chiefs spend hours at a time prepping and maintaining the aircraft.

There is definitely a sense of ownership knowing that the preparations allow the crew to operate at maximum performance, Todd said. Hours of preparations can really pay off by saving someone's life.

From the pilots to the crew chiefs, A Company, 3-158, operates with the knowledge that they are a team and dependent on one another.



Crew chief, Spc. Bryan Todd, A Company, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, mans a M-60 machine gun during operations in the Khowst Province.



A UH-60 Blackhawk from A Company, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, flies over the city of Khowst during a reconnaissance mission March 26.



Cpl. James Yarboro

Marines trail enemy, work with villagers to build trust

Story by
Cpl. Rich Mattingly
3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines

LAGHMAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – "America's Battalion," – 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines – completed Operation Mavericks March 23, successfully rounding up suspected terrorists and confiscating several weapons and explosives caches in the snow-covered mountains of Laghman Province, eastern Afghanistan.

K and L companies combined their efforts during the battalion operation, simultaneously pursuing several targets they believed were hiding in the Alishang District of Laghman Province. K Co. also worked with Navy Special Operations Forces who shared their objective among the hilltop villages.

Both the Navy SEALs and Marines

said pooling their resources was mutually beneficial during Mavericks.

"Working with NAVSOF was great," said 2nd Lt. Michael Poliquin, Kilo Co. platoon commander. "We do business in a very similar manner. We're both very methodical and detail-oriented with mission accomplishment being the top priority."

Many of the SEALs and Marines have already had experience working with the other service as part of a Marine Expeditionary Unit and were able to speak the same operational language, which the Marines said kept the mission focused.

"I've never seen something go as 'according-to-plan' as this did with as many variables as we had," said Capt. Skyler Mallicoat, K Co. commander.

The Marines were the first Coalition forces many of the villagers had ever encountered. Dealing with the culture shock and keeping everyone calm was essential to the success of the

mission.

"There are some uncertainties on both sides, among the young Marines who have never experienced this culture before and from the Afghans who see us swoop in on these huge machines and walk around with all our gear," explained Sgt. Michael Villanueva, a squad leader for Kilo Co.

Tensions rose when a man whose house was going to be searched protested. After calming him down the Marine and the man shook hands.

"I think seeing that, everyone understands we're not here to disrupt anyone's way of life or hurt anyone who isn't out to hurt other people," said Villanueva.

After they had finished their searches, the Marines distributed humanitarian assistance supplies to the people of the villages and then set in for a cold, wet night on the mountainside. Numerous indicators,

Cpl. James Yarbboro



including information from sympathetic villagers, warned that there might be attacks against their position during the night.

The Marines waited, but the enemy never appeared.

"At this point, they know what we

bring to the table," said Mallicoat, referring to the enemy's hesitation to engage the Marines. "They know they are a defeated force and they cannot match us."

"We accomplished a lot out there," said Lance Cpl. Rob Gaye, a machine

(Left) Marines of K Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, climb a stone wall on the way to a village March 19 during Operation Mavericks, an operation that Marines conducted to capture suspected terrorists in the vicinity of Methar Lam, Afghanistan.

(Opposite page) After an air insertion March 19, a Marine of K Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, starts Operation Mavericks, an operation that Marines conducted to capture suspected terrorists in the vicinity of Methar Lam, Afghanistan.

gunner with Kilo Co. "When the villagers realized we weren't there to hurt them, they calmed down. If we cause any damage during our operations, we do what we can to fix or replace it. It feels good to be able to do the right things for the people."

Helping Afghans understand that the Marines are there to help is very important.

"It's all about seeing the broader perspective," said Villanueva. "Once they see that we're focused on making their villages safer, they help us."

Cpls. Thomas Stickles and John Pollander, both rifleman of K Co. provide security on a rooftop while other Marines conduct searches through buildings during Operation Mavericks.



Cpl. James Yarbboro

TALCE takes to Herat: Airfield readied for ISAF

Story by
Air Force Capt. Catie Hague
455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - In less than 45 days a Tanker Airlift Control Element, primarily deployed from the 621st Contingency Response Wing at McGuire Air Force Base, N.J., will achieve what some may deem impossible.

This 47-person team is preparing Herat for the bed down of 300-plus Italian troops as they assume leadership over the International Security Assistance Force and eventually the entire western region of Afghanistan.

"For this particular tasking, we're supporting two C-17 sorties every day," said Maj. Mitchell Monroe, TALCE operations officer. "We also assist the Italian aerial port in servicing Coalition C-130s that land at Herat's airport. We bring these airlift aircraft in, offload them, upload whatever is required and send them on their way."

So far there are about 70 Italians in place at Herat, with more than 200 slated to arrive by the end of May.

"As soon as the last of the C-17s brings the new ISAF leadership and the cargo needed to support their mission,

we're out of here," Monroe said.

To ready the airfield for ISAF's transfer of authority, the TALCE requires specialists from a variety of combat-support career fields.

A TALCE is made up of three main assets, explained Major Monroe: command and control, aerial port and maintenance. "Depending on the tasking, we can also deploy with experts in intelligence, (Office of Special Investigations), security forces, medical, finance, weather and contracting."

This TALCE is unique in that it includes one finance NCO and eight security forces personnel - a supplement to McGuire's eight-person force -- from Travis AFB, Calif., as well as a full, four-person medical element out of MacDill Air Force Base, Fla.

The medical team is made up of a flight doctor, medical technician, public health professional and bioenvironmental engineer, said Dr. (Lt. Col.) Manny Naval, TALCE flight doctor. "Our job is to not only provide medical care for the TALCE team on the ground, but also prepare the incoming main party on what to expect regarding regional medical concerns."

According to Capt. Gwen Boleware, TALCE bioenvironmental engineer, the medical element has seen only minor injuries so far, but the drastic changes in temperature have brought on some colds.

"Within the first 36 hours of our arrival in Herat, we went from temperatures of 101 degrees and 30 knots sustained wind to April's all-time low of around 30 degrees," said Lt. Col. Mike Smith, TALCE commander.

"Despite operating under some extreme conditions," he said, "we're



Capt. Catie Hague

Senior Airman Aaron Karwoski, Tanker Airlift Control Element security forces team member, sits inside the command post tent and monitors security for Air Mobility Command's assets on the ground.

honestly thrilled to be here and to be playing such a vital role in the establishment of the Italian lead for ISAF. We have one of the best TALCEs anywhere."

The TALCE, which arrived in the beginning of April, expects to be "mission complete" within the next 30 days. And by early this summer, the 38-nation ISAF plans to assume responsibility from the United States for the security of the western portion of Afghanistan.



Capt. Catie Hague

Airman 1st Class Joseph Solis, Tanker Airlift Control Element aerial port, loads up empty pallets onto a forklift for C-17 uploading and their return to the airlift system for reuse.



Lt. Col. Mike Smith

Staff Sgts. Thomas Pollard and Michael Cassell, Tanker Airlift Control Element aerial port, offload a C-17 filled with supplies airlifted in for the Italians. The Italians plan to lead the International Security Assistance Force in Herat and the western portion of Afghanistan, and are increasing their forces by more than 200 personnel.

Medics save Afghan man

Story by Spc. Jon Arguello
Task Force Bronco Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE ORGUN-E, Afghanistan - Task Force Fury medics from B Company, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, saved the life of an Afghan man March 21 at a forward operating base in Paktika Province.

The man was treated after a quick decision was made by the company's first sergeant for the medics to intervene in the wounded man's treatment.

Two Afghan men approached the gate of Forward Operating Base Sharan begging for help. After realizing the men were seeking medical assistance for a man who was not getting the necessary aid from the local hospital, 1st Sgt. Charles Werley allowed the men to retrieve the critically wounded man and bring him inside the base.

"At first, it was two guys," Werley said. "Then we understood that they were trying to get help for a third man. I told them to bring the man to the base, but I wasn't sure if they would

return."

The two men returned with the injured man, who had sustained serious multiple stab wounds, and three medics immediately began treatment.

"The man had six stab wounds and a collapsed lung," said Spc. Samuel Wilson. "He almost died twice during treatment. The patient had to be chemically paralyzed so he could be treated."

"We drained one-and-one-half liters of blood from his lung and applied a chest seal," said Wilson. "We also inserted a tube into his trachea so the patient could breathe. We sustained his life for two hours until he could be (medically evacuated)."

The man was in such poor condition that Soldiers who saw his injuries doubted he would survive even with the medics' treatment.

"He would have definitely died," Werley said. "I'm surprised he survived. Somebody who can go on as long as he did with those types of injuries – all I can say is that he really wanted to live."

This event, as tragic as it could have been, has had a positive result, said Werley.

"This type of situation definitely wins hearts and minds," he said.

"It has been a very hands-on medical experience for our medics. You can talk about decompressing a lung all day, but actually doing it on a human provides invaluable experience," said Werley. "It has boosted the confidence in our medics. Seeing them work completely relaxed and calm in a life and death situation demonstrated just how skillful they are."

The medics also see the impact their work can have.

"We understand that it is a hearts and minds campaign and every opportunity we get to contribute to that campaign, we will," Wilson said.

The personal benefits are also rewarding, said Sgt. Glen Bolland, a member of the treatment team.

"It's our job to save lives whether they are American or Afghan," said Bolland. "A lot of (medics) come from families with medical (treatment) backgrounds. We have an appreciation for the personal rewards of our work. It's fulfilling and then some. It's an empowering experience to save someone's life."

Dari/Pashto phrase of the week



Thank you

[Dari] Tashakor
(Tah shah koor)

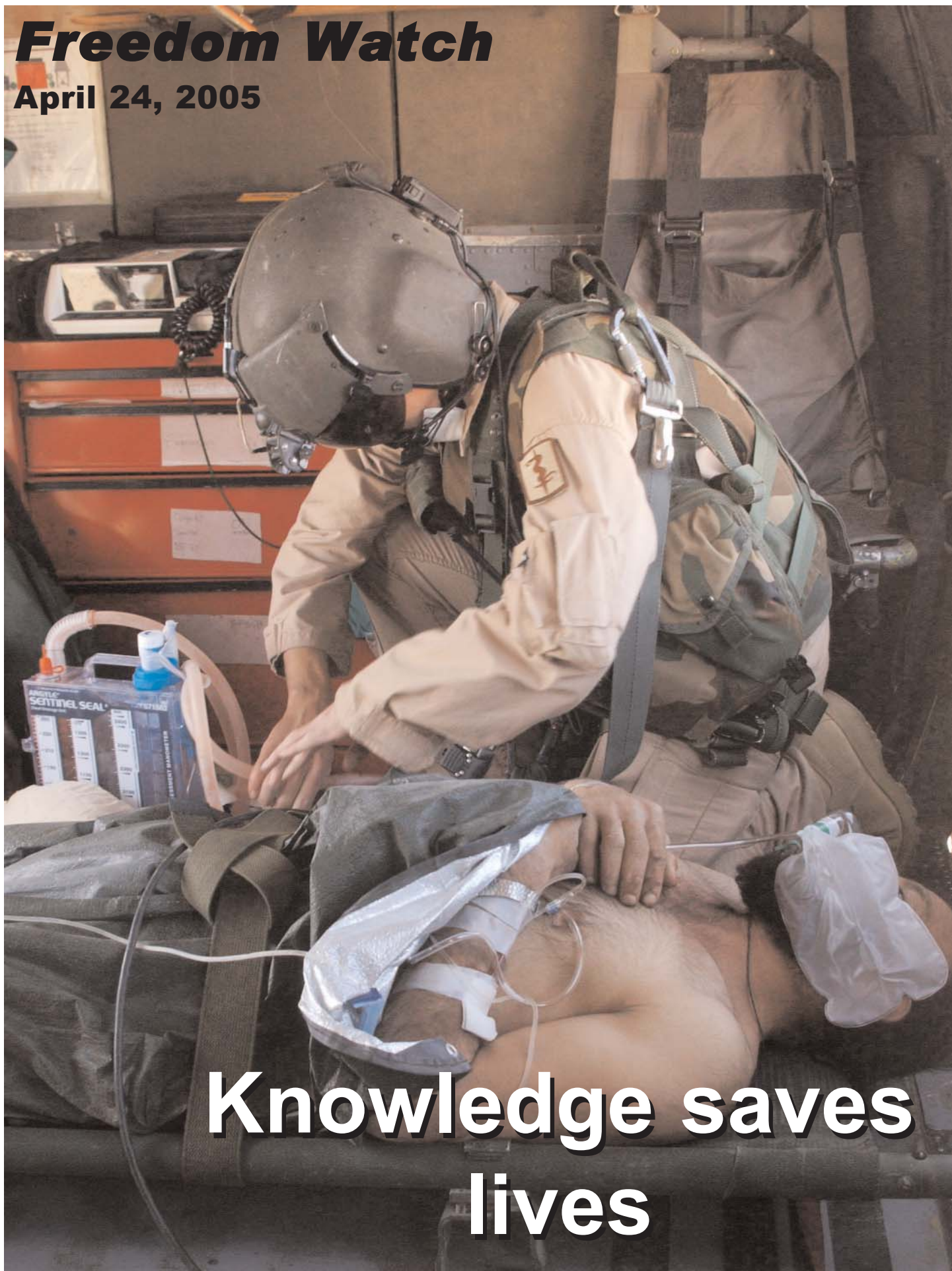
[Pashto] Manunah
(Muh nuh nuh)

Afghan cultural tidbit

Afghans may operate at many different levels of group identification. The cultural pattern is one of competition between equivalent units, but these units come together to challenge outsiders. This begins at the level of competition between male first cousins and works its way up through lineages, subtribes and tribes to ethnic group rivalries. This pattern allows nearly all Afghans to unite, at least at times, against outside threats, as was to great extent the case against the Soviet invasion.

Freedom Watch

April 24, 2005



Medics from the 68th Medical Company from Scofield Barracks, Hawaii, airlift an Afghan who was wounded while working at a fire base on October 6. Photo by Spc. Johnny Aragon